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Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Music Rendezvous - 2015

Lewistown, Montana

Megan Tanner Schultz, M.S.

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Case Study Report 2015-12
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Abstract

This study was conducted for the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Music Rendezvous to provide insight into the characteristics of attendees to the thirtieth annual event. Paper surveys were completed by 82 attendees of the event. Results show that 65% of attendees were residents of Montana and of those 63% came from outside of Fergus County. Visitors spent an average of four nights in the Lewistown area. More people spent money on restaurant/bar, hotel/motel, and retail goods while visiting the area than other spending categories. Respondents to the survey reported total spending of \$36,852 in Lewistown/Central Montana. Results provide event organizers with the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Central Montana Tourism Region with useful data for future event planning, making improvements to the event, event marketing/promotion, and understanding visitor spending associated with the event.

Executive Summary

More than half of the attendees at the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering were visiting from outside of Fergus County. These visitors make important economic contributions to Lewistown/Central Montana. The results of the study are worth considering for future planning of the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering and Western Music Rendezvous.

- 95% of out-of-county visitors spent at least one night away from home. Of those nights, an average of 4.00 were spent in the Lewistown area. 16% reported this being their first time visiting Lewistown and Central Montana.
- 97% of attendees selected the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering as their primary reason for being in the area.
- More money was spent by respondents in restaurant/bar (\$8,568), hotel/motel/b&b/rental cabin or home (\$8,565), and retail goods (\$6,990) than any other spending categories.
- 62% of respondents reported staying in hotel/motel, followed by 21% at a private campground.
- Attendees were mostly travelling as a couple (49%) or with family and friends (17%). The average travel group size was 2.03 people (average number of people represented in a spending group).
- The highest percentages of age categories for attendees were 65-75 year olds (58%), 55-64 years old (35%) and 75 and over (29%).
- People planned for this event ahead of time: 38% indicated that they planned to attend one to six months before the event and 35% planned over six months in advance.
- Attendees heard about the event mostly from word of mouth (56%), newspaper (35%), radio (25%), posters (20%), the July issue of Cowboys and Indians Magazine (17%), or the event website (17%).
- High levels of satisfaction with many aspects of the event were reported including: the cost of the event with a mean of 4.70 out of 5, event staff with a mean of 4.62, and organization of the event receiving a mean of 4.61 out of 5.
- Responses indicate the sound system, parking, and concessions available were the aspects of the event attendees were least satisfied with.
- 82% of attendees indicated they would attend the event next year with an additional 18% saying they would return to the event within 5 years.

Management Implications

Event attendees are traveling from other areas of Montana, other states, and Canada to attend the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering. This event brings both resident and nonresident visitors to Lewistown and Central Montana, and the attendees of the event make a variety of monetary contributions while visiting.

Organizers should focus on many things they are already doing well, reflected by the high levels of satisfaction with many aspects of the event. In addition, it is recommended that the organizers review the respondents' comments from Appendix B to gain insight into people's likes and dislikes of the variety of activities, number of people at the event, cleanliness, signage/directions, availability of restrooms, and location of the event. Changes based on this input could help in bringing back attendees to this event and Lewistown/Central Montana in the future.

Introduction

The Montana Cowboy Poetry and Western Music Rendezvous was hosted in Lewistown, Montana from August 13th through 16th, 2015. This was the 30th annual event held in the area. The event features poets and musical acts, art and gear vendor shows, dinners and dancing, as well as other local attractions.

The purpose of this study was to provide the organizers of the Montana Cowboy Poetry and Western Music Rendezvous 2015 an understanding of attendees at the event, their spending patterns in the Lewistown/Central Montana area, levels of satisfaction with different aspects of the annual event, as well as other information for the event organizers.

Methods

Data was collected by asking attendees to complete the questionnaire on-site. People willing to fill out the questionnaire were given a clipboard, pen, and a survey.

No documentation of the number of refusals was recorded.

Limitations

As in all research, there are limitations to the study. Limitations for this event include the following:

- Data was collected by board members and/or staff of the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering. These individuals were given information from ITRR on best practices for data collection including how to intercept people and obtain completed surveys.
- ITRR personnel were not present during the data collection for quality control.
- The total amount of surveys completed was a very low sample size.

Results

Of the 82 valid responses, more than half of the attendees are Montana residents (53 people) with most of those residing outside of Fergus County (31 people). For those out-of-county respondents, 16 percent of them (39 people) were visiting the Lewistown area (see Tables 1 and 2 for a breakdown of residence).

Attending The Event was the primary reason for being in the area for 97% of the attendees (62 people). This event attracted many to the area who did other things while they were here: vacation/recreation/pleasure (24 people); visit friends/relatives (15 people); business (2 people); and shopping (1 person). Attendees used a variety of lodging accommodations in Lewistown with most using hotel/motel/b&b/rental cabin or home (38 travel groups) followed by private campgrounds (13 groups). The marketing done for the event was widespread and attendees heard of the event in many places: word of mouth (43 people), newspaper (27 people), radio (19 people), posters (15 people), the July issue of Cowboys and Indians Magazine (13 people), the event website (13), and many other outlets.

Table 1: Residence of all Respondents

Place of Residence	# of total	% of total
Fergus County	18	22%
Other MT County	31	38%
MT not specified	4	5%
Total Montana =	53	
Out of State	29	35%
Total all Residences	82	

Table 2: Out-of-State Respondents

U.S. Residence	# of respondents
Alberta, Canada	3
Arizona	1
California	1
Colorado	2
Florida	1
Idaho	1
Maryland	2
Minnesota	1
North Dakota	1
Ohio	2
Unspecified	2
Washington	5
Wisconsin	1
Wyoming	6
Total	29

The mean age of respondents was 68 years old. Of those who were from outside Fergus County and responded to the survey, 95 percent reported that they spent at least one night away from home. Of those nights spent away from home, the greatest percent of respondents (46 percent) spent three nights in Montana. The average number of nights in Lewistown was four nights. A full breakdown of nights spent as well as results of all other questions in this survey can be found in Appendix A.

Expenditures

Spending information was asked of all respondents who reside outside of Fergus County, Montana. The survey asked that they report their best estimate of the total amount of money they and their family/travel group (if applicable) spent in the Lewistown/Central Montana area in the following categories: accommodations (hotel/motel/bed & breakfast/rental cabin/home), campground, food (restaurant/bar and groceries/snacks), transportation (gasoline/diesel, auto rental), and retail/services (retail goods and entertainment/recreation).

Table 3 presents the expenditure data of only the respondents who reported spending money in these categories. The mean expenditure of those who spent money for each category can be found along with the percentage of people who reported that they spent money in that category. The last column provides the total dollars spent by those respondents in each category. The total reported expenditure for respondents who spent was \$36,852.

Table 3: Expenditure Data: Expenditures calculated using only respondents who spent

Expenditure Category	Mean expenditures of attendees <u>who reported that they spent money</u> in these categories	% of respondents who reported spending money in each category	Total dollars spent in each category <u>by respondents who spent</u>
Restaurant/bar	\$155.78 (n=55)	67%	\$8,568
Hotel/motel/B&B/rental cabin/home	\$259.55 (n=33)	40%	\$8,565
Retail goods	\$205.59 (n=34)	42%	\$6,990
Entertainment/recreation	\$132.47 (n=38)	46%	\$5,034
Gasoline/diesel	\$105.79 (n=43)	52%	\$4,549
Campground	\$114.71 (n=14)	17%	\$1,606
Groceries/snacks	\$57.04 (n=27)	33%	\$1,540
Auto rental	\$0.00 (n=0)	0%	\$0
TOTAL			\$36,852

Appendix A- Results

Q1. Are you a resident of Montana? n=82

65% Yes 35% No (skip to Q3.)

Q2. Do you reside in Fergus County? n=49

37% Yes (skip to Q13. on back) 63% No (skip to Q4.)

Q3. In what state, province, or foreign country do you reside?

See Tables 1 and 2

Q4. Is this your first time visiting Lewistown and Central Montana? n=63

16% Yes 84% No

Q5. Was attending this event your primary reason for being in the area? n=64

97% Yes 3% No

Q6. For what other reasons are you visiting the area? (Check all that apply.) n=40

29% Vacation/recreation/pleasure 1% Just passing through 2% Business/convention/meeting
18% Visiting friends/relatives 1% Shopping

Q7. For this event, how many nights did you spend away from home? n=64, mean=4.66

5% 0 (skip to Q.13) 3% 1 42% 3 5% 5 3% 7 0% 9
11% 2 22% 4 3% 6 0% 8 6% 10 or more

Q8. How many of those nights were in Montana? n=61, mean=4.41

0% 0 15% 2 23% 4 2% 6 0% 8 2% 10 or more
3% 1 46% 3 8% 5 2% 7 0% 9

Q9. Of your nights in Montana, how many did you stay in Lewistown? n=60, mean=4.00

0% 0 20% 2 13% 4 0% 6 0% 8 0% 10 or more
7% 1 52% 3 3% 5 3% 7 0% 9

Q10. In what type of accommodation(s) did you stay in Lewistown? (Check all that apply.) n=61

62% Hotel/motel/B&B 21% Private campground 0% Resort/condominium
0% Rental cabin/home 12% Home of friend/relative 0% Guest ranch
3% Public land camping 2% Second home/cabin/condo 2% Vehicle in parking lot

See table 3 for Expenditures

Q11. Please enter your best estimate of the TOTAL amount of money in US dollars you (and your family/travel group, if applicable) spent in Lewistown/Central Montana in each of the following categories. If you did not spend money in a category, please leave it blank.

ACCOMMODATIONS in Central MT

Hotel/motel/bed & breakfast

\$

Campground

\$

FOOD in Central MT

Restaurant/bar

\$

Groceries/snacks

\$

TRANSPORTATION in Central MT

Gasoline/diesel

\$

Auto rental

\$

RETAIL/SERVICES in Central MT

Retail goods

\$

Entertainment/recreation

\$

Q12. How many people does the above spending represent (including yourself, i.e., your travel group size)? n=60; mean = 2.03

15% 1	3% 3	2% 5	0% 7	0% 9	0% more than 10
75% 2	5% 4	0% 6	0% 8	0% 10	

Q13. What option best describes the group with whom you attended this event? n=79

8% Self	10% Immediate family	17% Family/friends	0% Business associates
49% Couple	4% Extended family	13% Friends	0% Organized group/club

Q14. Please select all the ages represented in your group: n=80 for each age category

0% 0-5 yrs.	0% 11-17 yrs.	6% 25-34 yrs.	6% 45-54 yrs.	58% 65-74 yrs.
0% 6-10 yrs.	1% 18-24 yrs.	4% 35-44 yrs.	35% 55-64 yrs.	29% 75 and over

Q15. How long before this event did you make plans to attend? n=77

4% The day of the event	20% 1-4 weeks before the event	35% Over 6 months before the event
4% 1-7 days before the event	38% 1-6 months before the event	

Q16. How did you learn about the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering & Western Music Rendezvous? (Check all that apply.)

n=77 per selection

56% Word of Mouth	20% Posters	8% E-mail from event planners	17% Event website
35% Newspaper	17% Cowboys and Indians Magazine(July issue)	0% Group or club	4% Social media
25% Radio	1% Other magazine	0% Retail outlet	8% Other website
9% Television	3% Direct mail	0% Flyer	

Q17. Please rate your satisfaction with the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering & Western Music Rendezvous:

Satisfaction	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Mean	Total respondents
Organization of the event	0%	3%	1%	29%	68%	4.61	n=77
Event staff	0%	0%	4%	30%	66%	4.62	n=76
Cost of the event	0%	0%	3%	25%	73%	4.70	n=73
Location of the event	0%	13%	14%	34%	39%	3.99	n=77
Concessions available	3%	20%	16%	31%	30%	3.66	n=70
Number of people at the event	0%	1%	13%	39%	47%	4.31	n=75
Parking	1%	22%	26%	33%	18%	3.44	n=77
Sound system	13%	20%	25%	33%	10%	3.08	n=77
Variety of activities	0%	0%	4%	53%	43%	4.39	n=76
Signage/directions	0%	4%	14%	54%	28%	4.07	n=74
Cleanliness	0%	1%	10%	53%	35%	4.22	n=77
Availability of restrooms	0%	8%	10%	51%	30%	4.04	n=76

*N/A responses were re-coded to be a missing response for the most accurate mean score.

Q18. What is your age? n=77

Range=28-87, mean=67.68

Q19. What is your gender? n=80

41% Male 59% Female

Q20. When might you come to the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering again? n=77

82% Next Year 18% Within 5 Years 0% Never

Q21. Please tell us what you liked about the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

See Appendix B

Q22. Please tell us what you did not like about the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

See Appendix B

Q23. What suggestions do you have for entertainers/performers for the Saturday night Grand Stage Show?

See Appendix B

Q24. What other suggestions do you have for improvements to the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering?

See Appendix B

Appendix B: Open-ended Responses

Q21. Please tell us what you liked about the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

All events
All of it
All of it
All of it
Cart up and down Main St. Good variety of events. Great vendors at Yogo
Enjoy the people- music and displays
Enjoy the stories/poems and thoughts put into their works
Enjoyed the poetry very much, but not enough time if you changed rooms
Entertainment quality- people quality- ranch, country folks
Everything
Excellent combination of new and old poets/performers
Excellent displays of amateur talent
Excellent entertainers.
Fantastic talent and obvious friendships between performers and very pleasant stuff
Friendliness of all workers/volunteers and willingness to help/suggest for a more enjoyable visit
Friendly, clean
Fun time to hear creative works of poets and musicians! 1. Mix of party, music during each dinner; 2. The variety of poets and musicians; 3. Excellent venue Saturday evening
Good combination of new and old performers. Liked Rattlesnake Jake
Good entertainment
Good to meet new people
Great people, well attended, interesting vendors
Great people. Great music. Lots of fun.
Great value to hear talented poets and musicians
I enjoy the content, presenters, and meeting new people with the same interests.
I like the singing and guitar playing the best
I liked it all
I liked the variety of poetry, especially local/regional poets
Like old home coming weekend
Liked it all.
Liked the bio on performers. Red Segal good draw
Love the poets
Loved it- we also have an event in Ellensburg each February "Spirit of the West.com" Yours is also great- love small town gatherings
Music
Music and poetry. The dedication of people who set everything up and assisted in every way
Music concert Saturday night
Music, vendors, the people
My husband and I come every year that our work allows. We are ranchers and first attended the Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Big Timber. It is our one-day vacation for the year. We have never been disappointed!
Originality- casual, upbeat, variety
People
People like me!
Performers were great this year. Really enjoyed them

Program variety
Street shoutout
The Board of Directors and their staff is world class!
The friendliness of people
The music
The people
The performers
The performers
The poets were good. Most of the music was good.
The quality of entertainment
The variety of events
The whole event. The crowd is so friendly
The wonderful people that attend
This was a new experience for us. Smallish event that allowed close contact with performers.
Variety
Variety of events
Variety of talent. Organization
Variety, friendliness, quality of performers
Very nice hard working folks put this together
Well organized and fun- hospitality great
Wonderful people, music, poets, stores in town very friendly

Q22. Please tell us what you did not like about the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

1. Some presenters went on too long cutting others' time short; 2. Disruption of people entering/leaving the room during presentations; 3. Outdoor venue too hot Friday afternoon and acoustics poor- not conducive to poetry recitation.
10th year- wouldn't miss it!!
5 minutes more in between sessions
As a performer, it is hard to spend 5 days with travel, etc. and only sing 8 songs. Nice "round robin" sessions but hard on folks that travel so far. Maybe 45 minute sets for 'proven' performers
Back 40 is way too small; many people have to stand, there are people walking through, noise from vendors and from the pool
Back 40 music should be in Sapphire where there's less noise and a stage.
Better microphone in courtyard.
Doors not open until 6:00 at main event on Saturday
Hard for me to walk so far from entrance to motel to the "Back Forty" music- pretty loud noise from the vendor and pool area when musicians were performing. More chairs?
Hot weather
I don't care for the hotel. Staff not friendly. Food not good.
More group music. Better microphone in courtyard
N/A
N/A
Need better mic, especially courtyard
No coffee, no cookies, water not available outside of the rooms. Restaurant was unbearably slow
No coffee, no cookies. Snacks should be included with admission cost. Restaurant had poor service. Waited lengthy time for food and drink. Clearly not enough help. Menu limited and bland.

No mike available for some performers
Not enough dance floor
Not enough room for the music setting area. But do like the back area- need a stage differently
Nothing
Nothing- it was all great
Older age, perhaps is making it harder to hear. It seemed that while the amplification helped in volume it also tended to distort. Perhaps you might consider that.
One performer on stage and hardly could sing!
Parking
Poets did same poems in different sessions the same day
Pool side venue- awful! Either move the vendors or better yet create another room for performers.
Poor sound system. Couldn't bring dogs in because too hot in car.
Rooms where entertainment occurred did not have air conditioners turned on!
Sessions outside in very hot weather were intolerable. Sound system not working or not used by performs that need them. No overall map for where rooms are located. Inadequate food/drinks at main site.
Setup of welcoming BBQ- had to walk a long way. Heat and bugs were terrible while waiting in line
Some of the hotel staff could have been more pleasant (front desk was great). And the Thursday night meal was poorly supplied allowing the food supplies to become exhausted before replenishing. Many people had to wait- no butter for rolls and no coffee
Some performers took too much time from others. Some performers did not have "cowboy poems" etc.
The "rotating" sessions made for too many repeat poems when going to multiple rooms to fully sample to variety of different poets. If this is the format, poets should be prepared to (illegible) more poems or maybe you should cut down on the number of participants with a limited command of their work.
The BBQ dinner. For \$20 each, I'm sure there are much better meals available in town. The show after was great.
The cassette/book providers should have to pop 10% to the gathering.
The food
The restroom was very restrictive for handicapped.
Hotel provided poor service
Vendors by pool
Venue for the dance- not enough chairs, carpet dance floor, no bar. The back 40 is noisy, pool, and way too small
We came to see Dave Stamy- love him. He was in Ellensburg 2015. My husband was born in Lewistown.
Hotel did not appear organized and helpful especially when food ran out at Thursday barbecue
Hotel food service poor
Poor flow through hotel, staff not helpful
Restaurant
Restaurant food
Location understaffed in bar and restaurant. BBQ buffet too far away and ran out of food. Didn't provide coffee or butter at BBQ.

Q23. What suggestions do you have for entertainers/performers for the Saturday night Grand Stage Show?

??
1. Hearing assist devices; 2. MC does not need to have an "act"- he was good but we were there to hear Dave and Red
Cowboys need to take their hats off during show
Dave Stamey always
Dave Stamey comes back (treat him right!)

Did not attend
Don Edwards
Don't attend that
Group performers with fiddles, mandolins, guitars. Baxter Black, Waddie Mitchell
Hank Cramer
Have enjoyed every Saturday performer.
Haven't been there yet
Hold the mike when reading poem
It was truly a performance to be remembered. All entertainers were so motivated to please as well as staff.
Keep at Yogo
Like what we have seen every year
Local
Love your choices- Dave Stamy my favorite. Fri night concert would be nice, too!
Mary Kaye
Michael Martin Murphy
N/A
Need bigger facility
None
Some years we attend, some years we are unable to. But feel you have excellent entertainment for night shows.
Space for musicians inadequate
They have been great as is over the years
Waddie Mitchell, Sourdough Slim, Michael Martin Murphy, High Country Cowboys (out of Red Lodge)
Yodeling lady from Canada should be on grand stage. Don't hear women yodelers anymore- she's the best!

Q24. What other suggestions do you have for improvements to the Montana Cowboy Poetry Gathering?

1. If hosts/moderator are going to read bios, read them as written; 2. Tell presenters they have only 10 mins.
All was very nice other than dinner first night
BBQ was disappointing. Not enough parking. Signage/directions were mostly OK. Handicap restroom- would be nice to have higher toilet in ladies room.
Better sound
Better sound at BBQ. Constructions at location and took up a lot of parking space
Bigger venue
Cool the performing rooms down!
Definitely need improved sound systems. Sound in courtyard was disaster.
Don't drop your voice on the punch line
Good job!
Great job
Hotel costs were high in my opinion- drinks/food as well as hotel room costs.
Insist on better food! BBQ, mashed potatoes, a real tossed salad, and drinks i.e., tea, coffee, sodas. Butter for the bread.
Just continue- moving it back to the Yogo- just more comfortable surroundings. But, we still enjoyed the entertainment regardless.
Loved Rattlesnake Jack
Mix in some coffee breaks between sessions with local sponsors- sure would help in the afternoon!
More chairs for courtyard and Back 40

More chairs for music area. Need more hours for music.
More courtyard chairs.
More outside event can take dogs. Too hot in car. Didn't get to sit through as many events because too hot for dogs in camper very long.
More Western vendors... loved the ones you had. Spent \$\$\$. We will be back next year.
Move Back 40 to the Sapphire room. Find a better spot for the dance- Eagles or Sapphire room. At least one is not a country/cowboy performer
Move it away from current location if possible. Not a good place.
Move to better location
None
None
None
Only want longer sets for performers who have paid their dues and proved they are great entertainers.
Open mike on Friday was overcrowded and no food after 7:30
Please have water and coffee in the vendor area, for the vendors. Vending machine was broken.
The Fri jam was fun but woefully mis-planned. People were pouring in and there were no seats. There should have been a full bar and real dance floor. Many performers came which is great, but it was embarrassing that they had no place to land.
The host for the day sessions need to keep control of the time and know that some "hog" the time. Maybe a bell to ring when time is up. Cut down on number of people invited.
The hosts need to give full names of performers, not just first names.
This year in Elko they had a story tellers night for newbees. Ran rampant. It was great!
Too hot outside for cowboy poetry. Nearly everyone use the mike. All rooms should have mikes. Some poets went overtime and others didn't get enough time.
Use the microphones more
Water available in day. Vending machines out of order.
We thought it was fine
Well worth attending